

What's in fruits and vegetables?

Fruits and vegetables are a great source of many vitamins, minerals, and fiber the body needs. They are also packed with hundreds of naturally occurring substances called phytochemicals that may help protect against many diseases. And most fruits and vegetables are low in fat and calories.

VITAMINS

Fruits and vegetables provide many important vitamins, like vitamin A and vitamin C. The body needs vitamins to do many things. For example, some vitamins help the body produce energy. Others help keep skin healthy. Many adults do not get enough vitamins A and C through the foods they eat. The best way to get vitamins is to eat the whole foods that contain them like fruits and vegetables.

MINERALS

Fruits and vegetables provide many important minerals, like potassium and magnesium. Many adults do not get enough potassium and magnesium. The body needs potassium to help maintain healthy blood pressure and magnesium to help maintain healthy bones.

FIBER

Most fruits and vegetables are a good source of fiber. One type of fiber can help lower cholesterol. It also slows down digestion so that the body can absorb more nutrients and better control blood sugar levels. Another type of fiber helps you get rid of waste and keeps you regular.

PHYTOCHEMICALS

Phytochemicals (fight-o-chemicals) are naturally occurring substances in fruits and vegetables. Phytochemicals may help fight to protect your health. Fruits and vegetables have hundreds of phytochemicals. Phytochemicals work together with vitamins and minerals to promote good health.

Here are just a few examples of the phytochemicals found in fruits and vegetables:

- **Carotenoids** in red and yellow-orange fruits and vegetables (such as tomatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots)
- **Lycopene** in tomato-based foods (such as tomato sauce, tomato paste)
- **Lutein and zeaxanthin** in leafy greens (such as collard greens, spinach, romaine lettuce)
- **Flavanoids** in brightly colored fruits and vegetables (such as blueberries, cherries, strawberries)

The vitamins, minerals, fiber, and phytochemicals in fruits and vegetables combine for a health-protecting and disease-fighting effect that you can't get from vitamin pills. Only a variety of fruits and vegetables give you all of these nutrients together.

